

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
INFORMATION REPORT

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws, Title 18, U.S.C. Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

COUNTRY East Germany

REPORT

SUBJECT Shortage of Ball Bearings  
in East Germany

DATE DISTR. 9 June 1955

NO. OF PAGES 2

DATE OF INFO.

REQUIREMENT NO. RD

PLACE ACQUIRED

REFERENCES

DATE ACQUIRED

25X1

This is UNEVALUATED Information

THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.  
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.  
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

1. The shortage of ball bearings represents one of the most serious bottlenecks of the East German industrial production. The VEB DKF (Deutsche Kugellagerfabriken) enterprise in Leipzig and a number of smaller firms, are not able to meet the demands of the East German industry.
2. East German production of ball bearings is handicapped by the shortage of proper steel alloys. The East German Government has made several unsuccessful attempts to overcome this shortage. Large funds were invested in VEB Edelstahlwerk, Doehlen, and, in late 1952 and early 1953, a special forge plant for high quality steel was built at VEB Edelstahlwerk Doehlen. As of early 1955, the enterprise had not been able to produce the proper steel alloys. The steel produced is brittle and not suitable for rolling; in addition, no suitable alloys are available. The Doehlen attempts at producing a suitable alloy for ball bearings are carried out under the supervision of Dr. Ritterasmann (fnu), a renowned metallurgical expert. In addition, Prof. Maurer (fnu) of the Eisenforschungsinstitut (Iron Research Institute) in Hennigsdorf, has carried out experiments in a small ball bearing plant near Bad Liebenstein in Thuringia, but he also has not succeeded in solving the problem.
3. The shortage of ball bearings has handicapped the production of a number of enterprises producing motors, such as VEB Elektromotorenwerk Wernigerode, VEB Sachsenwerk Niedersiedlitz, and VEB Kleinmotorenwerk Hartha. The production of motorized vehicles has also greatly suffered from a shortage of ball bearings. There are no spare ball bearings available for automobiles. VEB KMW Eisenach (formerly BMW) planned the production during 1954 of 1,500 type KMW 340 automobiles. However, due to the shortage of ball bearings this production program was abandoned.

25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T

STATE	#x	ARMY	#x	NAVY	x	AIR	#x	FBI		AEC		ORR E
-------	----	------	----	------	---	-----	----	-----	--	-----	--	-------

25X1

(Note: Washington distribution indicated by "X"; Field distribution by "#").

25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T

-2-

4. In view of the shortage of ball bearings and the unsuccessful attempts at solving the problem, the East German Ministry for Machine Construction has tried to substitute, wherever possible, bearings made of bronze or synthetic materials. Development of substitute bearings is generously financed by the East German Government. In the past, East Germany imported ball bearings from [redacted] Czechoslovakia. 25X1
5. The Soviets have not recently dismantled any equipment for the production of ball bearings from any German enterprise including DKF in Leipzig. The insufficient production of ball bearings in East Germany is not caused by the lack of suitable equipment but rather by the lack of base material, as mentioned above. It is believed that the Soviets do not need to dismantle any ball bearing equipment in East Germany, since they did so in the early stages of the post-war period and now have their own ball bearing production. It is known that there is a plant for ball bearing production in the Molotov plant in Gorkiy. The Soviet Army in East Germany has a well-equipped plant for the repair of ball bearings in the former "Imperial" enterprise in Meissen (Elbe).

1. [redacted] Comment. Molotov motor vehicle plant 25X1
- [redacted] 25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T